



**DOVER SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

DOVER SCHOOL BOARD – MINUTES

Meeting Type:	Budget Workshop
Meeting Location:	City Council Chambers
Meeting Date:	Monday, February 16, 2009
Meeting Time:	6:30 pm

A workshop session of the Dover School Board was called to order by Chairperson Marjorie Fisher on Monday, February 16, 2009, at 6:30 p.m. in Council Chambers for the purpose of discussing the Superintendent's fiscal year 2010 budget.

A. ROLL CALL: Members present were Britt Ulinski Schuman, Dorothea Hooper, Carolyn Mebert, Audra Lurvey, Marjorie Fisher, Beth Setear, and Doris Grady.

Also present were Superintendent John O'Connor, Jean Briggs, CIA Director; Patrick Boodey, Principal WPS; Dustin Gray, Principal GES; Larry DeYoung, Principal DMS; Deborah Migneault, Principal DHS; Malcolm Forsman, Principal HSS; James Amara, CTC Director; Sandra Crosson, Pupil Personnel Services Director; Deb Hackett, DTU President; Staff; and Citizens.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Dorothea Hooper led the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. CITIZEN'S FORUM: Chairperson Fisher stated that Citizen's Forum would be held after a brief budget presentation by the Superintendent. If his presentation did not answer someone's questions, Citizen's Forum will be open later in the agenda. (See below)

D. BUDGET DISCUSSION: Dr. O'Connor advised that the Fiscal Year 2010 budget is in a state of flux. "What we say today may not be what we say tomorrow." He explained that he had just learned today that the Governor's budget submitted to the legislature included \$6,051,542 in adequacy instead of the \$5,262,210 figure that was suggested previously. "At first blush," that equals an increase of \$789,332 in revenue. Additionally, what impact the stimulus package will have on education is another unknown.

The Superintendent then presented the following information and suggestions for consideration by the Board:

The 2008/2009 School Year Adopted Budget was \$42,978,335. The Superintendent's 2009/2010 Proposed Budget was for \$44,633,221, a 3.8% growth under the Tax Cap of \$1,654,886. City Councilors made it clear, however, that they wanted both the School District and the City Manager's budgets to reflect only a 2% growth. A 2% increase equals only \$833,769. That means the proposed budget of \$44,633,221, an increase of \$1,654,886 would need to be reduced by \$821,117 to meet the 2% tax cap formula.

Dr. O'Connor reminded the Board that \$249,076 in unfunded positions for the 2008/2009 school year that were added into the 2009/2010 budget. These are positions the Board added after the Board approved the 2008/2009 budget.

Next, the Superintendent provided three lists, Priority A, B, and C, of items the Board could consider cutting from the budget (with A cut first, B second, and C third). Dr.



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O'Connor reiterated frequently that neither the Superintendent, School Board, not a single administrator in the District recommends ANY of the changes to be listed.

Priority A – List One: (These positions are being moved from the General Fund to Title Funds, thus reducing the proposed general budget by \$154,545. That leaves \$679,224 remaining to be cut.)

- Classroom Reduction Teacher – GES \$50,765
 - Classroom Reduction Teacher – HSS \$51,890
 - Classroom Reduction Teacher – WPS \$51,890
- Total: \$154,545

Priority A – List Two:

- Project MORE - \$8,690
 - Grade 5 Teacher- \$52,000 (Increase class sizes to approximately 24)
 - Grade 6 Teacher - \$52,000 (Increase class sizes to approximately 26)
 - Garrison Teacher – 1 FTE \$52,000 (Increase 2nd grade class to approx. 21)
 - Horne Teacher – 1 FTE \$52,000 (Increase 2nd grade class to approx. 21.2)
- Total: \$216,690

Priority A – List Three:

- Instrumental Music - \$85,647
Elementary – 1 FTE
- DMS Band & Chorus - \$50,512
- DHS Marching Band \$2,460

Total: \$138,619

Priority A – List Four:

- DMS Soccer - \$6,035
- Paraprofessionals – 2 FTE \$36,000
- Teachers - \$208,000
District Wide – 4 FTE
- Tuition Private Schools - \$50,000
- Salary Reduction - \$12,000
Non-Union Personnel

Total: \$312,035

Priority -: List Five:

- NJROTC - \$58,993

Total of ALL Priority A Cuts - \$880,882 (Over the amount needed to be cut.)

Priority B - List One:

- Full-Day Kindergarten Paraprofessionals - \$42,275



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- Full-Day Kindergarten Teachers - \$134,914
 - Full-Day Related Arts \$46,213
- Total: \$223,402

Priority B - List Two:

- Freshman Sports (All) - \$26,185
 - Paraprofessionals – 10 FTE \$200,000
 - High School Transportation \$243,986
- Total: \$470,171

Priority C – List One:

- Advanced Placement Program - 1 FTE \$52,000
 - Middle School Team Reduction – 4 Teachers \$213,125
 - ESOL Teacher \$76,687
 - Office Staff – 2 FTE \$85,332
- Total: \$427,144

Superintendent O'Connor then re-reviewed the increase in estimated Adequacy Aid:
 2009 Adequacy initially reported for 2010: \$5,262,210
 2010 Adequacy in Governor's Budget (full-funding): \$6,051,542
 Increase: \$789,332

Dr. O'Connor cautioned, however, that there are still many unknown areas of flux remaining in the proposed budget – State increasing employer contribution to retirement fund by 5%. What effect will Stimulus Money have on the budget? What will be the State Tax Rate? Both DEOP and DTU contracts are under negotiation and the budget does not reflect any salary increases for either bargaining unit. He added that the additional \$800,000 in Adequacy money will probably be used to offset some of these potential costs.

The Superintendent then reviewed other possible alternatives for cutting costs and raising revenues:

First Student Total Average Daily Count = 212
 COAST Total Average Daily Count = 106
 Total Average Daily Student Riders = 318
 318 x \$100 Rider Fee = \$31,800 revenue

Consolidate Bus Routes and Possibly Cut One COAST Bus = \$36,070 savings

Parking Fee Revenues (Maximum) 347 spaces at \$100 = \$34,700

Charge Fee for Full-Day Kindergarten (175 students x \$300 = \$52,500)



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Superintendent O'Connor then asked for feedback from Board members.

Ms. Grady stated, "I think I was very clear, Dr. O'Connor, when I got that list, how I felt about it. I think I told you at that time, my thought was to give it right back to you because it was very negative; it will cause furor throughout this whole city; and I don't think that's the kind of system that we need. I'd like to make sure some information is clear before we start citizens' forum and discussing this budget. The tax cap (I prefer to call it, spending cap) will allow us to increase 3.8% over last year's adopted budget. If we got to that point, we'd be doing nothing illegal. This would generate an excess of about \$1,000,000 over what our budget said last year. Recent news...today, the Governor has not taken out that increase of adequacy money to us. The only way that would change would be with your State Representatives and Senators. So, if you're interested in that, you can contact them."

Ms. Grady continued, "So that would give us about \$1.8 million over and above what we had last year...It would seem to me that somewhere in our budget we've added a big percentage to be able to cut what this list is telling us we have to cut. A reasonable school budget, I feel, can be passed without such Draconian cuts. The list of cuts that circulated over the weekend...is not what I requested at the February 2nd meeting. I did ask that each administrator evaluate the programs in their building and bring back changes that can be made without a major impact on students." Ms. Grady then read from the page 9 of the minutes of the February 2nd meeting. "What I asked for, was to bring back a list that would identify the things that you absolutely had to have (not cut)...a second list, what would you need in addition to that? and the third list was a wish list."

Dorothea Hooper asked how the Superintendent could cut \$50,000 in private school tuition since the District is obligated to provide programs for students when the district cannot provide services. Dr. O'Connor stated there is over \$1,000,000 funding that account and he believes it can be decreased by \$50,000 and the District can live within that limit. Ms. Hooper then stated she liked the idea that we could continue programs by charging a modest fee. She referred specifically to full-day kindergarten and high school transportation. She noted, however, that she did not agree with charging additional fees for music or athletics because parents already "pay fees" for their students to participate in those programs (musical instruments, uniforms, and the like). Additionally, Ms. Hooper noted that the District has always provided for parents of students who cannot afford to participate in programs, and that would continue.

Dr. O'Connor cautioned that eliminating high school bus transportation or charging a fee for bus ridership could increase traffic on an already overburdened corridor when traveling to the middle and high schools. Ms. Lurvey agreed, noting, if they did add a transportation fee, they may have to look at shuffling school start times to accommodate additional traffic.



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Beth Setear stated that she had a different view from Ms. Grady as to the budget presented by the Superintendent. “What you’ve presented as the Superintendent’s budget is really what you as the Superintendent and your administrators believe you actually need to run the district appropriately and in a way in which we could be proud. And, what you’ve done, having been limited by the 2% increase and changes in any kind of other funding is really, say to us, ‘Here a variety of different cuts we could make,’ and you’re leaving it somewhat up to us to say, ‘If we have to cut something, let’s try this or let’s try that. So I appreciate the variety of cuts we got to look at. It’s not all in one area, it’s not all in one building, and it’s not all at one level.”

Ms. Setear asked the Superintendent to estimate how much of the additional adequacy money would impact the budget. “How much we might actually feel from that, talking away the other variables. The increase? \$200,000? \$300,000? \$400,000?” Superintendent O’Connor replied that he could not give an estimate at this time, noting his reluctance to provide a figure today that may not be anywhere near the final figure. “I could give you a number, and if I’m off by \$200,000, people are going to say, ‘Why did you tell us that?’ If I were to say \$500,000 and we operate over the next two to three weeks thinking we’ll end up with about \$500,000 and we end up with \$250,000, you’ll say, ‘wait a minute – you were way off!’” The Superintendent recommended waiting to gather more information over the next week to hear from the Governor’s office and the Superintendent’s organization that will provide additional information to give us a better feel.

Doris Grady stated, “The cuts that you’ve asked us to work with are \$821,117. That’s what all these drastic cuts were from which I think are tough. However, if the Governor is agreeing to give us that \$800,000, that’s almost balancing itself off. So, therefore, these major cuts can be part of a picture if we eventually have to get into those. However, I can’t see discussing – they balance one another, plus the fact that we get the extra money from the last year’s budget anyway – if that’s the case, it’s like we’re scratching this out with the Governor’s \$800,000. Why sit for hours tearing apart such drastic cuts? In my opinion, yes, we’re going to have to make some cuts...To me, if we set these (cuts) aside for the time being, to eliminate all the disgruntled messages we’re getting, and have your administrators go back again and do what I asked for at the last meeting. You’re not going to have to look at cuts. Pretty much now, the money’s pretty much even. Look at where we can save in case we run in to...whatever things come up.”

Dr. O’Connor agreed that, on the surface, it looks like the deficit and additional adequacy money seem to be a ‘wash.’ However, he cautioned the Board once again that the budget is in flux. Five days ago, the District was looking at an \$800,000 deficit. Four days ago, that changed. He explained he did not yet know where it will come out.



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Superintendent O'Connor continued, "I'm not certain I understand the question, 'Tell us what is necessary?' Do you want a list of what is necessary?" Ms. Grady asked for what the Superintendent "gave us last year." Dr. O'Connor explained last year, he gave the Board lists of cuts. Then, when the cuts were made, there was additional money and the Superintendent made lists of things to put back in. Those lists were prioritized from the cut list to move back onto the "safe list." Other Board members agreed that had been the process.

Ms. Fisher asked the Board to suspend the rules to listen to Citizen's Forum at this time and continue the discussion after that.

E. CITIZEN'S FORUM:

- Greg Brown, Parent and GES Teacher: Spoke in support of full-day kindergarten, stating his belief the students attending half day in the afternoon miss an unfair amount of class time due to early release days and snow days. He stated he would also be willing to pay a fee.
- Christine (no last name given), Parent from Nottingham: Spoke in favor of retaining the Marching Band and the good it does for students.
- Deb Hackett, DTU President: Agreed with Ms. Grady – School board should submit a 3.8% budget in accordance with the tax cap; To adhere to the City Council request for 2% is unrealistic. Also, do not add programs (kindergarten and CTC courses) at the expense of eliminating existing positions.
- Tim Russell, Parent: Spoke in favor of retaining music (band) in elementary schools. "Once cuts are made at elementary and middle schools, the high school program is gone."
- David Tromba, District Music CA: Spoke in favor of the music and band programs, citing the great "band for the buck" for the District. Elementary students = 135 with one teacher. Add middle school = 350 students with 2 teachers; Add high school – grand total 400 students with 2.25 teachers. He stated the program is effective, it is working. He asked the Board to provide staff members with an opportunity to see how changes to the program could create economies.
- Carolyn Clifford, Parent: Spoke in support of music programs continuing to begin in elementary school
- Matt Seversen, Parent: Spoke in support of music programs that provide opportunities that students would never have otherwise.
- Mark Geuther, Parent: Stated citizens of Dover passed a tax cap and it would not be fair to require a budget less than 3.8% under the tax cap. He urged the School Board to present a 3.8% budget to the City Council versus 2%.

Board members continued their discussions:

Dorothea Hooper commented, "People get up and say the citizens of Dover passed the tax cap. Actually, only 30% of the voters in Dover went out to vote for anything in that



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election. Only 50% of that 30% passed the tax cap. This is not a huge city-wide mandate. This was an election that was not well attended. I cannot tell you how many people have come up to me...and said, 'I didn't know what I was voting for. I signed a petition but I didn't really understand it.' Maybe there's a lesson here that everyone ought to adhere to. But it's here. The reality is it's here. 3.8%...and I agree, we have been trying in good faith to adhere to that 3.8% spending cap. Now, the message has come to us...that the only acceptable thing will really be a 2%. That pushes it from 3.8% to 2%...I hope some of your people will make your way down to the Council at the next meeting and express some of the ideas you've expressed to us today. We are really trying very hard to maintain the excellence of the education in the Dover School system with what little we're given to work with...Where do we cut? I wasn't aware there was a big issue with music...I'm afraid to mention athletics...we really are in a terrible, terrible position. On top of that, we are told we have to get our budget in by March 15th. We don't even have enough time to turn around and think this through with studied time. How are we going to do this so we do the least damage? That's the way I'm going to vote. Where do we cut or what do we do that does the least damage? That's the best I can do for you folks, that's the best I can do." She added there is also a burden placed on the district by unfunded state mandates. "If you've got any better ideas, folks, email us!"

Doris Grady commented, "One of our big problem is the City Council is the body that makes the final decision on what our budget's going to be. They're trying to set it at 2%. Doesn't mean they're going to accomplish 2%. I'm going to sit back and see whether or not they can do that. My feeling tonight is that we were trying to cut \$800+ thousand - came up with the list that many of you have been exposed to. We're finding that it's 99% sure that we're going to get \$800,000 back from the state. Personally, I would like to 'can' the list that we have tonight, and look at the finances we have, and the cuts wouldn't be this major; and look at how we can continue with our educational program where kids are benefited and look at those that aren't working - eliminate that, and see...I feel that we're on an even keel at the moment. I know there have to be some cuts but I don't think they have to be this set of drastic cuts. I think we have a new point to start from. We're on an even keel balancing on the offside where we don't want to be. The Council and the Board have to work as a cooperative body. Even if we went 3.8% and they're saying 2% they'll send it back to us and they'll say cut it. Then it's a little late as to what we have to cut. Personally, I would like to scrap the list we have tonight, look at what monies we have, if we get the state money, and then look at what we have to cut than arguing over everything here."

Ms. Grady continued, "I heard Mr. Tromba come to the podium and expressing that they had looked at their program to see how they could still service the students and give them what they have. I think the one problem that we have in spending the money, and many of you have come up here talking about, it's necessary in 4th grade, necessary in 5th grade, and necessary in 6th grade...I served on the parent music council. At that time Bob Quinn was here. We had a 125 member playing band. Right now, that's not



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happening. So, if you're looking at it from the outside, how many of these students that 'have to have music' don't make it after they leave middle school? So maybe Mr. Tromba is looking at that and that's part of 'how do we get back where we were?' Because out of 1700 students, we have 40 playing members...and that's a small number for that amount of money spent every year. So that would become a question on 'where do we make cuts?' Ms. Grady added that she had spoken with Mr. Tromba and suggested he look at the program and present it to Dr. O'Connor and, "Maybe he can still present the program, increase the high school participation, and present the whole program for just a little less money. So, if all departments did that, you could help us make some of the cuts."

Britt Ulinski Schuman agreed with Ms. Grady that the Board is in a difficult position because definitive information is not available from state or federal agencies at this point. She also stated she was in agreement with Dorothea Hooper that some voters did not vote or voted and were uninformed on what impact the tax cap would have on education. Ms. Ulinski Schuman then questioned why nothing from the Career Technical Center had been placed on the potential cuts list. "When we're potentially increasing class sizes, it doesn't seem right to be adding additional programs. What's the point of having a fantastic CTC if we're doing a disservice to our younger students who maybe might not even get to that point, or not be able to excel enough to want to get to the point of going into any of the CTC courses? Another thing I'm curious about is...materials for CTC. There are some (courses) that are very materials heavy. Is there a potential to charge for those materials? I know we keep hearing that CTC generates revenue. For some of these (programs) like kindergarten, we're showing a user fee so I can kind of build that into the budget. I don't have that revenue from the CTC to really factor in to see if it is covering itself. If it is covering itself, is there any way to have that equal out to zero in the end? All I know is that it's taking about \$400,000 away from the budget." Dr. O'Connor indicated he would have Jim Amara prepare some information to provide answers to Ms. Ulinski Schuman's questions.

Marjorie Fisher asked the Superintendent about costs associated with the preschool program. She wondered if there was any way to cut back on those students who are attending but are not identified with special needs in order to eliminate a teaching position. Dr. O'Connor explained there are 63 students currently enrolled in preschool. Two-thirds of those students are identified with special needs. The district is required to provide services or contract out services for those children. The remaining students (20 or less) are referred by head start. While not identified, they come from less fortunate homes. All studies have proven that there a more effective preschool program includes students without special needs to serve as "models" for the other students. Ms. Fisher asked if it would be less expensive for the district to contract out the program. Dr. O'Connor stated he performed a cost analysis just a few years ago and found the costs to be comparable. Audra Lurvey added that Occupational and Physical Therapy services still must be provided by the district at those outside sites. Dr. O'Connor also



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noted that costs for the program were reduced when the preschool program director's position was eliminated last year to save money.

Chairperson Marjorie Fisher noted that the City Council capitalizes equipment in its budget and questioned why the district did not. The Superintendent explained that the district equipment is books, technology equipment, science equipment and the like. Those items do not have a long shelf-life and would be costly to bond over a short term. The City's equipment includes items like fire trucks and other vehicles. Items with a life expectancy of 20 years or more are generally those that would be capitalized.

Dorothea Hooper reminded the Board and community that as far as the additional adequacy money creating a "wash" with the cuts, there are still two contracts in negotiations that need to be settled. She asked the Superintendent the procedures the district would follow if the budget were approved by City Council before those contracts were negotiated. The Superintendent stated there would be two ways to handle that situation. First would be to "pink slip" employees to account for the additional deficit. A second option would be for the Board to go back to the City Council and ask for them to approve the new contract and then have a super-majority approve the additional funding.

Doris Grady clarified that, as a member of the 2008/2009 Career Technical Center Committee, 1332 of 1700 students are being served by the CTC this year. One third of the cost is raised by revenue. The general budget funds two-thirds of the cost. Ms. Grady added that research has shown that students who participate in CTC courses are more successful graduating from college than students who participate in high school academic courses only. Most CTC students start in a two-year college and then transfer to four-year colleges to complete their education.

Britt Ulinski Schuman noted, however, that core curriculum classes do not ask for \$400,000 in funding while the CTC does.

There was no additional discussion.

F: ADJOURNMENT: Audra Lurvey moved, Carolyn Mebert seconded, to adjourn at 8:10 p.m. An oral **VOTE PASSED 7/0**.

Respectfully submitted,

BETH SETEAR, Secretary
Dover School Board
BS/kgb
February 17, 2008